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Family policy and gender- role attitudes in Germany

A quantitative analysis of the relationship between public
policy and public opinion

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ABSTRACT

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Using data from the 1991-2012 German General Social Survey, this thesis examines the relationship between family policy reform and gender-role attitudes among different socio-demographic groups in Germany. The research question is: What is the relationship between family policy reform and changing attitudes towards gender roles? More specifically the thesis ask: What is the directionality of the interaction between policy change and mass preferences and to what extent does social class matter in this relationship? Based on previous research it is argued that the attitudes of the upper class play a more important role compared to the attitudes of the lower and middle class. The empirical analysis shows that, overall, gender-role attitudes have become less traditional in Germany since the beginning of the 1990s. It is also shown that the majority of the policy reforms have created more incentives for mothers to re-enter the labour force. However, the empirical results do not allow any conclusions about the directionality of the relationship between policy change and attitudes, since the attitudinal change has been constant over the observed period of time. Moreover, there is no clear evidence that upper class attitudes have been more important for policy-makers than the attitudes of the lower and the middle class.

Keywords: family policy, gender-role attitudes, public policy, public opinion, German General Social Survey

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMF	<i>Bundesministerium der Finanzen</i> (Federal Ministry of Finance)
BMFSFJ	<i>Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend</i> (Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)
BRD	<i>Bundesrepublik Deutschland</i> (Federal Republic of Germany)
CDU	<i>Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i> (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
CSU	<i>Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern</i> (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
CRRA	Child-Raising Allowance Act (<i>Bundeserziehungsgeldgesetz</i>)
CYA	Children and Youth Act (<i>Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz</i>)
DEA	Daycare Expansion Act (<i>Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz</i>)
DESTATIS	<i>Statistisches Bundesamt</i> (Federal Statistical Office of Germany)
EU	European Union
DDR	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i> (German Democratic Republic)
MPA	Maternity Protection Act (<i>Mutterschutzgesetz</i>)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
PBA	Parental Benefit Act (<i>Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz</i>)

1. Introduction

Can progressive policies help promote egalitarian views on gender roles? Or are egalitarian views the necessary prerequisite for a policy change towards more equality between men and women? Using Germany as an example this thesis will investigate the relationship between the development of family policies and changing attitudes towards gender roles.

Women's labour market participation and the possibility to combine parenthood and work are pressing issues in today's Europe. Apart from affecting women's position in society, these issues also have repercussions for the society as a whole. The 'ageing of Europe' has become the new buzzword among political elites and social scientists alike.¹ The European Commission describes it as 'one of the greatest social and economic challenges of the 21st century' (European Commission 2015). With fertility rates plummeting, social scholars and policy-makers are confounded by the fact that even though women achieve higher and better levels of formal education than ever before in Europe, they are still far less integrated into the labour market and at a much higher risk for old-age poverty than men (DESTATIS 2012a; OECD 2013). The pressing question is how fertility rates can be increased while, at the same time, substantially elevating the level of female employment.

For many the answer to this question lies in the enactment of progressive family policies that allow women to effectively reconcile their family and working life (e.g. Apps & Rees 2004; Björklund 2006; Rovny 2011). This argument rests on the widespread consensus about the vital role of public policy for the welfare of citizens. However, it is also well-known that in areas that touch upon such private domains like the organisation of family life, individual attitudes towards the role of men and women are just as important as public policies. A large body of research has shown how the prevalence of gender stereotypes at an individual level can stifle social progress even though formal rules and regulations postulate equal opportunities for men and women (see for instance Barreto 2009; Heilman 2001). Thus, the real challenge for many societies in Europe lies in the modernization of family policy together with a change of individual attitudes towards a more liberal understanding of gender roles.

¹ The term 'ageing of Europe' describes the combination of decreased nativity rates and increased life expectancy among the populations of EU member states.

Clearly, policy reform and attitudinal change cannot be achieved independently from each other. When it comes to the relationship between public policy and public opinion, the majority of research finds that policies and mass preferences both shape and reflect each other. The question is, however, under which circumstances public opinion is able to influence family policy and vice versa. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is:

What is the relationship between family policy reform and changing attitudes towards gender roles?

More specifically the thesis asks:

What is the directionality of the interaction between policy change and mass preferences and to what extent does social class matter in this relationship?

1.1 Background

The answer to this question is of special interest for a country like Germany, which in the past years has implemented several major family policy reforms in response to record low fertility and maternal employment rates. As a result for many observers German family policy has evolved from a male-breadwinner to a dual-earner family model (Lewis 2001; Mahon 2002). However, even though attitudes have become slightly more egalitarian overall, recent survey data shows that the majority of Germans still holds relatively traditional gender role attitudes compared to other industrialized countries (BMFSFJ 2005). Consequently, many of the indicators that the policy reforms aimed to improve have not changed considerably.

Above all, the birth rate has remained remarkably flat. In Germany the total fertility rate fell below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman already in the 1970s, then dipped as low as 1.2 in the first half of the 1980s and 1990s. In recent years it has been fairly steady at about 1.35 (DESTATIS 2012b). When it comes to the level of female employment the figures do not look as bleak at first glance. The good news is that female employment has risen from 62% in 2001 to 71% in 2011, which is well above the EU average of 62% in 2011. However, it is still far away from the 81% of male employment. In addition, when looking at full-time employment the situation looks completely different. Here, Germany is among the countries

with the lowest levels of female full-time employment across the EU. In 2011 46% of employed women worked part-time.² For men this figure was at 10% for the same period. The EU average of women working part-time lies at 32%. Of those working part-time in Germany, 55% stated caring for children or other family members as the main reason for their part-time employment (DESTATIS 2012c). Due to this exceptionally high level of part-time work, women in Germany face difficulties reaching top positions in work. Germany scores in the lower third of all EU countries when it comes to the amount of women in executive positions. As a consequence, the gender pay gap lies at 23% with only Estonia, the Czech Republic and Austria having even higher pay gaps in the EU (DESTATIS 2012c).

While the unequal distribution of paid employment among men and women can be seen as one of the lead causes for child poverty and old-age poverty of women, low fertility and female employment rates also have severe consequences for the society as a whole. Not only is the population decline likely to result in a loss of economic prosperity, but the population ageing also puts severe strains on the long-term viability of the welfare state. In Germany in 1990 around 15% of the population were older than 65 years. In 2011 this number has risen to 21%, making Germany the country with the most elderly across the EU (DESTATIS 2012d).

However, Germany is not the only country within the EU facing these kinds of problems. Member states like Malta, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Slovakia and Ireland all have female employment rates below 60% (European Commission 2013). Paradoxically, countries like Spain and Italy not only face low female employment rates but also exceptionally low fertility rates (Del Boca *et al.* 2004, Nollenberger & Rodríguez-Planas 2011). Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, have long been perceived as forerunners in Europe when it comes to the reconciliation of motherhood and paid employment. In Sweden, for instance, the expansion of public childcare enabled mothers to become workers already in the 1970s. At the same time Sweden has had higher fertility rates than many other European countries (Korpi 2000). One plausible explanation for these differences lies in the specific design of the welfare state. Not surprisingly, the Nordic countries have been described as ‘women-friendly’ welfare states with policies that promote women’s access to jobs as well as good-quality social care services (Hernes 1987; Wærness 1984), while the liberal and conservative welfare states have

² Part-time employment is defined as less than 32 hours per week.

been found to foster social policies that promote the male-breadwinner family model and inhibit gender equality (Orloff 1993)

However, since the new millennium there has been a shift in the EU. While in the 1980s and 1990s many of the EU's efforts in the social policy field aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and diminishing sexual discrimination, from 2000 on the EU focused more on stimulating employment growth, especially among women. In 2000 the EU adopted the Lisbon Strategy, which set the agenda for employment in the Union for the following ten years. One of the main targets was to raise the proportion of women in paid employment to at least 60% by 2010. The current Europe 2020 headline is even more ambitious in this aspect. It aims at increasing the overall employment rate of the population aged 20 to 64 to at least 75% by 2020. So far not much has been achieved in this area. As of 2013 only 62.5 % of women were in paid employment across the EU compared to 74.2 % of men (European Commission, 2013). Recognizing that the lack of childcare is among the main obstacles in maternal labour market participation, the EU also set targets for the provision of childcare. In 2002 the Council called on member states to provide childcare to at least 90% of children between the age of three and mandatory school age and to at least 33% for children under the age of three (Plantenga & Siegel 2004; Saraceno & Leira 2008).

Despite the fact that these targets are not obligatory but fall under the mechanism of the open method of coordination (OMC), there has been a significant expansion of family policy oriented to promoting maternal employment across the EU in the past years (Ferragina & Seeleib-Kaiser 2015). Thus, Germany exemplifies the case of a European welfare state struggling with low birth rates and low female employment rates and attempting to address these problems with progressive family policies. Indeed, many countries with a former strong inclination to the male breadwinner model now have policies that support women's labour market participation. The degree of change has been especially large in countries like Austria and Ireland where the public provision of childcare as well as the generosity of parental leave has increased to levels matching those of countries with a social democratic or Christian democratic welfare regime respectively (ibid.). Despite the recent reforms, both Germany and Austria still exhibit considerable gender inequalities compared to countries with a longer tradition of social-democratic family policies (Leitner 2010, Ostner 2010).

This dilemma brings us back to the topic of this thesis: In order for fertility and employment rates to improve, not only the right policies have to be in place, but also individual attitudes towards the roles of men and women have to change. Simply put, if national governments provide affordable and good-quality childcare but mothers refrain from using those offers for fear of being branded as ‘uncaring’ or ‘unnatural mothers’, then all the childcare facilities in the world cannot make a difference. It is therefore vital that we gain a solid understanding of the relationship between family policy and gender role attitudes.

1.2 Aim and outline

The aim of this thesis is to shed light onto the relationship between gender-role attitudes and the development of family policy in Germany. In order to reach this aim the thesis maps the development of German family policy from the mid-1980s onwards and compares it with the development of individual attitudes towards gender roles.

The analysis of family policy will be done by conducting a secondary data analysis. The policies that will be analysed are: parental leave regulations, child allowance entitlements, the provision of public child-care services and family tax regulations. For the analysis of attitudes, survey data is taken from the German General Social Survey (GESIS 2014). The results of this thesis can not only contribute to our understanding of how governments try to tackle challenges such as population ageing and gender inequality, but also to our theoretical understanding of the directionality of the interaction between public policy and mass preferences in general. Thus, the findings of this thesis are relevant from a policy-related as well as an academic point of view. Furthermore, the results are relevant from a European Studies perspective, since Germany is one of many EU countries where gendered patterns of labour market participation pose a challenge to the economic viability of the welfare state.

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 describes the empirical results in the previous literature and presents the research gap in this field. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical backdrop of the thesis and gives an overview of existing theoretical approaches to the topic. Chapter 4 discusses the operationalization of the research question. It presents which materials and which methodology were used and states the delimitations of the thesis. Chapter 5 gives an overview of the development of German family policy. It discusses the development

of parental leave, child allowance and public day-care regulations as well as family taxation policy. Chapter 6 provides the statistical analysis of the development of public attitudes towards gender roles. The chapter ends with juxtaposing the development of family policy with the changes in gender-role attitudes. Chapter 7 summarizes the main empirical findings and critically discusses them. Furthermore, ideas for further research are pointed out.

2. Literature review

The relevant previous literature can be divided into three categories: studies that examine cross-national differences in gender-role attitudes, research that focuses on the effects of family policy on certain outcomes such as fertility rates or female employment, and studies that analyse family policies. In the following I will first present the most relevant findings of the cross-national studies and then address the findings of the second strand of research. In the last section, I will summarize the findings of the studies analysing family policy.

2.1 The relationship between family policy and gender attitudes

Among the cross-sectional comparative studies there is no consensus about the relationship between gender-role attitudes and family policies. While some researchers argue that attitudes reflect the policy context, others find that attitudes develop independent from family policy arrangements. Starting with the latter group, I will present examples from both sides to demonstrate the different findings.

Motiejunaite and Kravchenko (2008) analyse the relationship between family policy arrangements, individual attitudes towards combining parenting and work responsibilities, and actual family practices in Sweden and Russia. Using opinion data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) from the years 1994 and 2002, they find that family policy is instrumental in facilitating female employment, but does not bring accompanying changes in gender-role attitudes. Despite high female labour market participation and strong similarities in family policy in both Sweden and Russia, gender-role attitudes differ significantly from each other. They conclude that the influence of the family policy context is reflected in the actual family arrangements but not in the individual opinions.

Similarly, Knudsen and Wærness (2001) compare attitudes towards mothers' employment among different socio-economic groups in Great Britain, Sweden and Norway. They find that overall Sweden has the most positive attitudes towards mothers' employment while Norway has the most negative ones and Great Britain lies in the middle. From this finding they conclude that the national historical context is more important in determining attitudes than welfare policies. They argue that British attitudes are more gender-egalitarian because of the long history of industrialization and working women. Norway, on the other hand, has not experienced such a long time of industrialization and the Norwegian family and equality policies cannot make up for that. They conclude that while socio-demographic characteristics account for variations in attitudes, the linkage between attitudes and individual characteristics is modified by the national context.

Turning to the research that argues that the policy context matters for gender attitudes, one example is Sundström (1999) who analyses attitudes towards female labour market participation and the division of domestic work in different age groups in Sweden, Italy and West Germany. She finds strong variations in attitudes between the three countries and argues that the differences reflect national policies. She concludes that disparities in attitudes between countries can be derived from differences in labour market policies.

Similarly, Kangas and Rostgaard (2007) examine the linkage between levels of female employment, individual attitudes and family policies in seven countries. In their analysis of policies they focus on childcare and parental leave and find that individual attitudes and preferences matter only to some extent. They come to the conclusion that policies are more important than attitudes because they present national opportunity structures. These opportunity structures constrain preferences and are the reason for different patterns of female employment across countries.

Lastly, Sjöberg (2004) examines the linkage between family policy institutions and gender-role attitudes in 13 industrialized countries. His analysis is guided by two assumption: Firstly, he assumes that attitudes will differ according to the capacity of the family policy institutions to reconcile paid and unpaid work. Secondly, he expects that attitudes will differ according to the norms and values that are perpetuated by the family policy institutions. He finds that both

assumptions hold true. More precisely, he concludes that variations in family policy models can contribute significantly to cross-national variations in gender role attitudes.

As can be seen, there is a large amount of previous research that examines the relationship between family policies and gender-role attitudes much like this thesis. However, none of these above-mentioned studies use a time-series research design. An example of a study that examines the determinants of feminist attitudes over a longer period of time is Bolzendahl and Myers (2004). The study seeks to shed light on the predictors of gender-egalitarian attitudes and analyses data collected over a period of 25 years in the US. However, this study only focuses on socio-demographic predictors, such as education, background and socialization, and does not take into account variations in family policy.

2.2 The effects of family policy and individual attitudes

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, many studies focus on certain quantifiable outcomes, such as the level of maternal employment or fertility rates, and attempt to analyse the determinants of these outcomes. Salles *et al.* (2010), for instance, analyse fertility levels in France and West Germany. Starting from the empirical observation that France has higher fertility levels than Germany even though mothers in France are encouraged to remain in the labour market while parenting, they conduct semi-structured interviews to assess individual attitudes towards combining work and motherhood. They find that policy changes do not affect fertility decisions in the short term. Instead, attitudes have a crucial role in determining the decisions of couples to have children. They conclude that especially in West Germany negative attitudes towards working mothers affect fertility decisions independent from the actual availability of external childcare.

However, Arpino *et al.* (2015) show in their study that the relationship between attitudes and fertility rates is by no means straightforward. They analyse attitudinal data from 27 countries and find that the relationship between fertility rates and attitudes is U-shaped. As attitudes move from being more traditional to being more egalitarian, an initial decrease in fertility can be observed. However, beyond a certain threshold, an additional increase in gender-egalitarian views results in an increase of fertility rates.

Moving on, Crompton *et al.* (2005) analyse whether gender role attitudes impact on the division of domestic labour. Their analysis covers Britain, Norway and the Czech Republic and they find that even though gender-role attitudes have become more egalitarian in all three countries there is no statistically significant association between the change in attitudes and men's participation in domestic work.

2.3 Family policy in Germany

With regards to studies focusing on the development of family policy in Germany, the previous research presents a more consistent picture. The majority of research agrees that German family policy has undergone major changes since the 1990 and especially after 2005 (see e.g. Fagnani 2012; Henninger *et al.* 2008; Spiess & Wrohlich 2008). The overall consent is that Germany has moved away from the traditional, single-earner/single-carer family model to a dual-earner/single-carer model (see e.g. Lewis 2001; Mahon 2002). The findings get more diverse when more policies than just family policies are analysed. Especially studies that focus on the gendered outcomes of social policy often include labour market or social assistance policies into their analysis. For instance, in his analysis of patterns of inequality in different welfare states, Korpi (2000) analyses family policies as well as public help to the elderly. Moreover, Leitner (2003), who classifies welfare states in light of their familialistic characteristics, also includes elderly care in her analysis. Their common argument is that not only the classical family policies impact on the gendered outcome of welfare states and should therefore be part of an analysis that deals with gender equality issues.

For this thesis, such an extensive overview of policies is not necessary. It is argued that care for elderly family members often affects families at a later stage in life when decisions about who is responsible for the unpaid housework and the care for children have already been made. Given that spouses rarely explicitly discuss the organisation of their daily life (Halleröd *et al.* 2007), it is safe to assume that decisions about care for elderly family members simply re-enforce existing patterns of the division of paid and unpaid work in a family. Furthermore, what the majority of these studies lack is an analysis of the micro-level implications of the policy context and a connection to the change in gender-role attitudes

To sum up, two points can be taken from the literature review: The majority of research agrees that individual attitudes have become more egalitarian overall and that German family policy has changed towards a more egalitarian understanding of gender roles over the past years. However, there is no consensus about the relationship of family policy reform and attitudinal change. Moreover, there seems to be a lack of studies that examine this linkage from a time-series perspective. Thus, this thesis aims to shed some light on the on-going scholarly debate regarding the linkage between policy and attitudes. The contribution of the thesis lies in the combination of the analysis of German family policy with the analysis of gender-role attitudes over a longer period of time. That said, it is understood that this thesis does not aim at rendering an exhaustive explanation of the linkage between public policy and attitudinal change. More precisely, the research design of the thesis cannot rule out that a third variable impacts on the relation of policy reform and attitudinal change.

3. Theory

This chapter provides the theoretical background of the thesis and gives an overview of existing theoretical approaches in the literature. The research question of this thesis taps into two areas of political science research: the relationship between public opinion and public policy in general and the linkage between mass preferences and the welfare state in particular. To lay the foundation for the theoretical discussion the chapter first presents an overview of the findings made on the linkage between policy-making and mass preferences. The second part of the chapter discusses insights from the literature on the institutional logic of the welfare state. The third section demonstrates why and in what way socio-demographic characteristics are likely to play an important role in relationship between welfare policy and mass preferences. The chapter ends with a discussion of the contribution of the thesis to the field of research as well as the formulation of the research hypotheses that guide the empirical analysis.

3.1 Public policy and public opinion

Even though the academic literature on the relationship between public opinion and government policy-making is by no means sparse, the findings of this strand of research are hardly conclusive. While one part of the research shows that policy-makers follow public demands

(e.g. Page & Shapiro 1992; Stimson 2004), the other part finds that political elites influence public opinion to reflect their own viewpoint (e.g. Kingdon 2003; Zaller 1992). Again others show that lawmakers ignore public opinion altogether (e.g. Korpi 1989). Furthermore, some researchers claim that public opinion is merely a theoretical construct, born out of opinion polls, that does not have a counterpart in the real world (e.g. Bishop 2005; Converse 1970). The argument goes that a lot of people do not have preconceived opinions on many of the issues asked in an opinion poll. Therefore, instead of stating their real opinion, respondents merely come up with an answer that seems appropriate to them in the given context. For this thesis, however, the issue of non-attitudes is very unlikely to pose a problem. After all, the questions on gender roles do not require any previous engagement in a specific topic but rather tap into the very personal views of individuals on how they wish to organise their working and private life.

One of the earlier studies of the relationship between public opinion and public policy by Childs (1965) finds that the influence of public opinion on policy-making varies largely from issue to issue and depends on several factors. These factors include the degree of agreement within the public, the intensity with which opinions are held and the extent of organized support for and against the public position. Moreover, Childs finds that public opinion influences government policy in two ways. Firstly, the public can exert direct pressures on policy-makers by showing their dissatisfaction with existing policies. Secondly, public opinion can constitute an indirect pressure by constraining lawmakers in their policy options. Simply put, in the first way politicians are pressured to change the status quo by opting for any kind of policy change, and in the second way policy-makers are pressured to opt for a specific policy change because they know that other policy options are likely to be met with widespread public disapproval. Child also notes that public opinion not only influences policy, but policy also influences opinion. Oftentimes when a policy decision is made, the public will accept it and re-adjust its opinion on the matter. (Kay 2010)

Similarly to Childs, Luttbeg (1981) identifies coercive and non-coercive ways how public opinion influences public policy. In coercive models, he distinguishes between the rational-activist model, the political parties model and the pressure group model. In the rational-activist model the public exerts pressure electorally to representatives, while in the political parties model the public pressures the members of political parties, who, in turn, pressure lawmakers. In the pressure group model, the public gathers in pressure groups, who influence policy-makers

through electoral and financial assistance. The non-coercive models, on the other hand, explain how the public can influence policy without any direct pressure to politicians. According to Luttbeg this can happen through believe sharing and “role play”. In the believe-sharing model, lawmakers act on their own beliefs, which however, coincide with the beliefs of his or her constituency and which are the reason he or she was elected by that constituency in the first place. In the role-play model, lawmakers proactively anticipate the attitudes of his or her constituency and act accordingly. (Kay 2010)

Sharp (1999) contributes to the discussion by adding a time perspective to the relationship of public opinion and public policy. Very much like this thesis, Sharp wants to find out the correspondence between public opinion and public policy over a period of several years. To explore the linkage she analyses six different policy fields and focuses at the continuing relationship after a policy has been enacted. Depending on the type of policy she reviews, Sharp finds several possible models of interaction. In the first model, termed “thermostat model”, public policy responds to public opinion and then public opinion adjusts to the policy change. Sharp deems this scenario as the most desirable one. In the second model, called “broken thermostat”, lawmakers are responsive to mass preferences, but public opinion does not adjust to the changes in policy. In the “policy learning sequence” model, both the public and lawmakers are first unresponsive to new developments. However, as more and more information becomes available and the issue becomes more salient, the public has an increased awareness, which facilitates policy change. In the final model, public policy is initially responsive to public demands, but responsiveness diminishes as the once popular solution becomes institutionalized into the bureaucracy and hard to change. In accordance with the concept of path dependence, she also finds that once enacted policies can decrease the responsiveness of lawmakers in that they reduce further policy options.

Sharp’s different models make an important point: the interaction between public policy and public opinion depends largely on the type of public policy in question. Since family policy is a classical welfare policy, the institutional constraints of the welfare state are likely to play an important role in determining the linkage between mass preferences and policy-making. In fact, Sharp’s last model is largely consistent with the findings of the literature on the institutional logic of the welfare state, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 The institutional logic of the welfare state

For the welfare state research the starting premise is that institutional structures play a decisive role in shaping the interaction between policy-makers and the public. Institutional theory describes several mechanisms in which institutions can affect the behaviour of social actors. These mechanisms provide a helpful roadmap for the understanding of how individual attitudes translate into public opinion and which constraints lawmakers and the public face within the highly bureaucratic and institutionalized system of the welfare state. Institutional theory is divided into three schools of thought, which all have a slightly different take on how institutions influence the political process. These schools are: rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism. The following provides a brief overview of the three approaches and explains in what way they relate to the topic of this thesis.

According to rational choice institutionalism, actors have a fixed set of preferences and behave strategically in order to maximize the attainment of these preferences (Hall & Taylor 1996). Political outcomes are the result of strategic interactions in which actors adapt their behaviour based on expectations about how others are likely to behave. Institutions provide information that reduce the uncertainty of actors about the behaviour of others. They thus lead actors towards particular calculations that result in an overall optimal outcome. This beneficial view on the effects of institutions explains the persistence of institutional structure. Deviation from the rules and procedures provided by institutions will result in outcomes that are less beneficial for everyone involved (*ibid.*) In terms of the question whether family policy can influence individual attitudes, proponents of the rational choice approach would agree. In their view, individuals would adapt their behaviour to the changed policy context in order to maximize their goals. For example, assuming that fathers want to be more involved in care-giving and the government decided to reserve half of the parental leave period to fathers while keeping the household income stable, then the rational logic would be for every father to take just as much parental leave as the mothers. However, reluctance to deviate from established rules and to risk an unfavourable outcome is likely to constitute a hindrance to change. In other words, individuals are likely to refrain from formulating new and untested policy options in the light of well-established rules.

Sociological institutionalists put more emphasize on the cultural dimension of politics (Hall & Taylor 1996). Even though they agree with rational choice scholars that actors are goal-oriented

and rational, they argue that what an actor perceives as ‘rational’ is itself socially constituted. Actors do not only try to maximize the attainment of their goals, but also seek to express their identity in socially appropriate ways. From this perspective, the main way in which institutions affect individuals is by providing norms of behaviour and specifying what one should do. By providing cognitive scripts and moral templates, institutions also specify what one can image as doable in a given context. Thus, they do not only affect the strategic calculations of individuals, but also the very preferences and identities that these individuals hold. The reason why institutions persist is seen in their conventionality and the way how they are taken for granted by actors. Because of their encompassing influence, institutions escape direct scrutiny and cannot be transformed easily (ibid.). With regard to the question of the thesis, sociological institutionalists would argue that individual and perceived gender norms are likely to have a larger influence on individual behaviour than any deviating policy incentives. It also means that a change in attitudes and policy is unlikely, since the status quo is perceived to be the moral norm.

Historical institutionalists utilize both the calculus approach of rational choice institutionalism and the cultural approach of sociological institutionalism for understanding how institutions affect individuals (Hall & Taylor 1996). What distinguishes historical institutionalism from rational choice and sociological institutionalism is the focus on history and the notion of path dependence as a concept for institutional development. Path dependence is the idea that early institutional developments set nations on distinct paths which determine how nations respond to new challenges. Furthermore, historical institutionalism argues that institutions are the outcomes of power struggles between social actors. Thus, institutions provide power unevenly over social groups and can explain cross-national variation in policy outcome for similar problems or goals (ibid.).

For this thesis historical institutionalism offers the best theoretical approach for several reasons. First of all, attitudes towards gender roles can be explained by both the calculus and the cultural approach. While the cultural perspective acknowledges that these kinds of attitudes are based on personal values and beliefs, the calculus approach points out that they are also determined by practical considerations. For instance, in a household where both parents believe in traditional gender roles but where the mother has a higher income than the father, the father might choose to stay at home and look after the children since it benefits the financial situation of the family. Secondly, historical institutionalism offers a convincing explanation for the

continuing differences in gender-role attitudes among East and West Germans. From a path dependence perspective the differences can be explained by the differing ideological orientation of the former GDR and FRG. The policy choices made after the Second World War until reunification formed certain paths that continue to influence individual attitudes even today. Lastly, historical institutionalism points out an aspect of the politics of social policy that the two other approaches fail to address: the uneven distribution of power resources among the different stakeholders within the welfare state. This imbalance of power has been demonstrated by Korpi (1983) and will be discussed in the following section.

3.3 Differences among social groups

In this section I argue that three socio-demographic characteristics play an important role in the relationship between gender-role attitudes and family policy-making in Germany: social class, gender and whether a person lives in East or West Germany. More precisely, I argue that these characteristics result in different gender-role attitudes and that the attitudinal differences among social groups matter to policy-makers.

When it comes to the role of social class in politics, it has been argued that the emergence of new conflicts has disrupted traditional cleavage politics, thus making the older, economic cleavage obsolete (for an overview see Bornschier 2009). More precisely, the educational revolution of the 1960s and 70s, processes of globalization and Europeanization as well as the post-materialist turn are said to have led to new critical junctures producing new conflicts in society (see e.g. Inglehart 1984, 1997; Kitschelt 1994, Kriesi 1998). Other research, on the other hand, has convincingly demonstrated that despite the emergence of new conflicts, class antagonisms continue to be the driving force of national politics (e.g. Evans 2000). What the debate has shown is that it matters which issue the political conflict is about and to what degree the issue relates to traditional cleavages (Bornschier 2009). Since family policy is a classical social-welfare policy, it arguably plays an important role in structuring the political conflict around it. After all, welfare state regimes themselves are a prime example of how differences in power resources among the social classes result in different welfare policies. Moreover, Bornschier (2010) finds that in Germany the class cleavage continues to play an important role in structuring party support and voting behaviour.

In order to understand the relationship between social class and welfare policy, the power resource theory developed by Korpi (1983) provides a useful starting point. According to the power resource model, the more political resources a class can collect, the more beneficial the welfare state outcome will be for that specific class. While Korpi was mainly interested in the linkage between different welfare state outcomes and the comparative power of the political left, other researchers have examined this mechanism from a more general point of view. The overall consensus in the literature is that the upper class is able to influence policy-making by dominating the public debate (e.g. Glynn *et al.* 1999). Therefore, it is argued in this thesis that upper class preferences are likely to have influenced the family policy reforms in Germany while the interests of the lower and middle class are likely to have had a lesser impact on the reforms. Moreover, in line with previous research, it is argued that the lower and working class hold more traditional gender-role attitudes, while the upper class has a more egalitarian value orientation (e.g. Svallvors 2006: Chpt. 6).

With regard to gender, it is argued in line with previous research that women, especially highly educated ones, hold more gender-egalitarian views compared to men (e.g. Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Crompton *et al.* 2005). The rationale behind this argument is that, given the fact that women provide the bulk of unpaid care work (e.g. Waddington 2011), it can be expected that women are less satisfied with existing family policies. Especially highly educated women show a stronger labour market attachment and are therefore more in need of progressive parental leave arrangements and comprehensive and affordable childcare facilities. Men, on the other hand, are expected to be more satisfied with existing arrangements and therefore hold more traditional gender-role views. For most men, a change in the status quo would most likely result in a comparatively more negative outcome.

Regarding the place of living it is expected that East Germans hold more egalitarian gender-role attitudes compared to West Germans. Previous research has shown that both maternal labour market participation as well as public childcare are more accepted in the former GDR than in West Germany (e.g. Rosenfeld *et al.* 2004). These empirical findings are in line with the path dependence approach of historical institutionalism, which argues that the different institutions that were built between 1945 and 1990 in East and West Germany continue to impact individual's behaviour.

It could be argued that education also matters for attitudes towards gender roles. The argument is that highly educated individuals have more egalitarian gender-role attitudes because of a stronger endorsement of democratic values such as equality (e.g. Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Crompton *et al.* 2005). However, due to problems in the empirical analysis with multicollinearity between education and social class, it is expected that the group of individuals with higher education overlaps to a large degree with the group of people in the upper class. Therefore, it is implied in the analysis that respondents from the upper class are comparatively well-educated.

To sum up, the hypotheses that will guide the empirical analysis are:

H1: The family policy reforms are likely to reflect upper class attitudes.

H2: The upper class is likely to have more gender-egalitarian views than the middle and the lower class.

H3: Women are likely to have more gender-egalitarian views than men.

H4: East Germans are likely to have more gender-egalitarian views than West Germans.

4. Data and methodology

To test the above hypotheses empirically, this thesis, in a first step, maps the development of family policies in Germany from the mid-1980s onwards, thereby covering several major reforms in this policy field. Methodologically, this will be done by conducting a secondary data analysis. The sources used in the analysis are articles from the academic literature as well as official documents and reports concerning the progress of the reforms conducted on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs (BMFSFJ). The policies that will be analysed are: parental leave regulations, child allowance entitlements, the provision of public child-care services and family tax regulations.

These four policies were chosen because they adequately represent the full-fledged picture of the German family policy context. Even though tax regulations might not be considered as family policy, it is a part of the analysis because the German provisions on the taxation of married couples financially rewards the dual-earner family model and thus promotes

stereotypical and unequal gender roles. It is therefore an important factor that needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the single-earner and dual-earner dimensions of the policy context.

It was also chosen to not include the development of maternity protection regulations into the policy analysis. In Germany, maternity protection concerns pregnant women in paid employment. It stipulates among others the periods a woman has to abstain from work before and after the birth as well as the timeframe a woman is protected against dismissal during and after her pregnancy. It is therefore primarily a measure to protect a mother from health risks and pregnancy-related dismissals and not a measure to facilitate the combination of motherhood and paid employment.

In the second part of the analysis, survey data is analysed from the German General Social Survey (GESIS 2014). I analyse a total of seven surveys, conducted in the years 1991, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012. The time range of the data analysis was restricted by the fact that data for East Germany are only available from the 1991 survey onwards. The surveyed population consists of randomly sampled persons aged 18 and older residing in Germany. After excluding all cases with missing values on the variables of interest, the total sample size is 20,046 respondents. Since the sample contains a disproportionate share of respondents from the former German Democratic Republic, weights were applied to the analysis in order to make up for the lower number of East German respondents.

Variables

Gender-role attitudes are measured from four questions asking respondents their opinion on gender-related issues. The questions are:

1. A small child is bound to suffer if his or her mother goes out to work.
2. It is much better for everyone concerned if the man goes out to work and the woman stays at home and looks after the house and children.
3. A child actually benefits from his or her mother having a job rather than just concentrating on the home.
4. A married woman should not work if there are not enough jobs to go around and her husband is also in a position to support the family.

Respondents can answer to these questions on a scale from 1 to 4: (1) completely agree; (2) tend to agree; (3) tend to disagree; and (4) completely disagree. A lower score represents more gender-traditional views and a higher score represents more gender-egalitarian views. Since question 3 has a reverse phrasing, it was recoded so that the scale was reversed.

Social class is measured by respondent's self-assessment. In the questionnaire respondents can assess their class-affiliation by choosing between categories (1) the lower class; (2) the working class; (3) the middle class; (4) the upper middle class; and (5) the upper class. For the sake of better interpretation, this five-class scheme was collapsed into a three-class scheme comprising of (1) the lower and working class; (2) the middle class; and (3) the upper middle and upper class. The author of this thesis is aware that it is common to measure class affiliation by the Erikson-Goldthorpe class scheme. However, using the Erikson-Goldthorpe scheme in this analysis would have reduced the sample size by more than half and no data at all would have been available for the year 2012. Therefore, it seemed advisable to use the respondents' self-assessment as an indicator for class affiliation.³

Besides class affiliation, gender and place of living (East or West Germany), age and religious denomination were included in the empirical analysis as control variable. This is in line with previous research showing that Catholic and older persons hold more traditional gender-role attitudes compared with Protestant and younger persons (e.g. Bolzendahl & Brooks 2005; Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Crompton *et al.* 2005).

Statistical method

In a first step, an explanatory factor analysis (principal component factoring) is conducted to calculate a gender attitudes score. In a second step, the effects of social class, gender and place of living on gender-role attitudes are tested using OLS regression.

³ In order to validate the results from the self-assessment class scheme the analysis was duplicated with the data from the Erikson-Goldthorpe class scheme. The analysis was made for five years (1991, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008) and shows similar results than the model with the self-assessment class scheme. The results of this analysis can be seen in the appendix.

5. Analysis of family policy

The German welfare regime has long been described as the typical male-breadwinner/female carer model (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1999). More recent studies suggest that Germany has – along with other western welfare states – developed an adult-worker or dual-earner family model (Lewis 2001; Mahon 2002). However, others claim that the reforms in Germany have only led to a reinvention of the male-breadwinner model which reconstructs traditional gender roles (Gottschall & Bird 2003). To be able to better understand and conceptualize the extent of change German family policy has undergone since the 1980s, this chapter will start with a brief outline of the different paths that East and West Germany pursued after the end of the Second World War. The second part of the chapter will focus on the development of German family policy from the first maternal leave regulation in 1979 until today and provides an analysis of the development in terms of the single vs. dual-earner family model developed by Korpi (2000).

5.1. Two policy legacies

Modernday German family policy institutions are the product of two distinct policy legacies: the socialist model of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and the conservative-corporatist model of the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD) with its strong ties to (pre-)Weimar Catholic traditions (Ostner 2010). In East Germany full employment was a top priority, which is why women were seen as both mothers and workers. Consequently, the East German government provided public childcare already in the 1960s and children were eligible for a spot in childcare aged 20 weeks and older. During the 1980s roughly 90% of East German women worked full-time while having at least one child. While this dual-worker family model was progressive, it also enabled the government to educate children in socialism from an early age (ibid.).

In West Germany there was strong support for the male-breadwinner family model. Men and women were seen as “different but equal” and were assumed to complement each other in their different social roles. While men were the sole earner of the family, women took care of household and care-related tasks. This division of paid and unpaid work among married couples was rewarded with marriage-related benefits and tax allowances (Ostner 2010). Moreover, due to the state-directed population and childbirth policy of the Nazi regime, marriage and family-related issues were considered to be private and not a matter of public policy (ibid.). Therefore,

West German family policy was characterized by the principle of subsidiarity. Instead of the government interfering with family matters, the family itself and local non-state organisations were considered to be the best help for individuals in need.

Like in many other Western countries the 1960s marked the beginning of educational expansion in West Germany and more and more women attained higher levels of education. With higher educational attainment came better career prospects and women started to enter the labour market in great numbers. By the end of the 1970s female labour market participation was increasing rapidly while fertility rates were plummeting. These developments were seen critically and sparked a political discussion about which measures needed to be taken to better reconcile family and employment (Ziefle 2009). Due to the political controversy around the issue, it was not until 1979 that the social-liberal coalition introduced a maternity leave law, the Maternity Protection Act, - the predecessor of today's parental leave. The new regulation provided a six-months leave period for mothers only together with a child allowance of 375 € per month. In 1984 the child allowance was reduced to 255 € per month (ibid.).

5.2. Child allowance and parental leave

With fertility levels at a record low in the first half of the 1980s, the West German government passed the Child-Raising Allowance Act (CRAA) which came into effect in 1986. Upon reunification East Germany adopted the policy model of Western Germany. The Child-Raising Allowance Act experienced a number of smaller and larger reforms and was in place until the year 2007 when it was replaced by the new Parental Benefit Act.

Under the CRAA the leave period was expanded from six to ten months. During this time mothers or fathers could apply for child-raising allowance amounting to 300 € per months. In the following years, both the leave period and the entitlement period for the child-raising allowance were gradually expanded to 1.5 years. In 1992, the leave period was doubled to a total of three years while the entitlement period was expanded to a total of two years (Ziefle 2009). This reform encouraged mothers to stay away from the labour market for at least two years. In families where the household income was provided by only the father, the mother could stay at home even longer. Thus, this reform favoured the sole-earner family model.

In 1998 a new regulation for the child-raising allowance was introduced. From then on parents could choose between receiving 307 € per month for the total period of two years or 460 € per month for a shortened period of one year (Fendrich *et al.* 2003). In other words, parent could choose between a shortened leave and less money or a longer leave and more money. It was argued that the second option would suit mothers or fathers who chose to continue to work in paid employment after their child's first birthday. However, in 2003, almost 90% of those entitled to the child-raising allowance chose to receive the allowance for two years instead of one. Differences between West and East Germany were large: of all of those entitled in the West 90.3% chose the two years, while the two years were only chosen by 77% of those entitled in the East (ibid.).

Entitlement to the child-raising allowance was dependent on the parent's income. Different income thresholds were defined depending on the age of the child. In 2003, for couples with one child the maximum yearly income was 51,130 €. For lone parents the threshold was 38,350 € per year. These income thresholds were applicable for the first six months after the child's birth and if they were exceeded, parents did not receive any child-raising allowance. From the seventh month on the thresholds were considerably lower: 16,470 € per year for couples and 13,498 € for lone parents. In contrast to the first six months, if this threshold was exceeded, the child-raising allowance was gradually reduced (Fendrich *et al.* 2003). In general, both mothers and fathers were entitled to apply for the child-raising allowance. The precondition for applying was that the parent spent time raising the child and did not work more than 19 hours per week in paid employment. In 2001 the maximum amount of hours one was allowed to work in paid employment was raised to 30 hours per week. Despite the fact that fathers were just as entitled as mothers to apply for the child-raising allowance, in 2003, 97% of all applications were submitted by mothers. Differences between East and West Germany were marginal (ibid.).

In 2007 the new Parental Benefit Act (PBA) was enforced. The means-tested child-raising allowance was replaced by an income-related parental benefit which was set at a wage replacement level of 67% of former net earnings of the person applying for the allowance. The maximum allowance is 1,800 € per month while the minimum allowance amounts to 300 € per month. The minimum allowance is designed for unemployed parents. In addition, the parental leave period was reduced from 24 to 12 months with the option of two additional 'partner months'. This means that the leave period is extended by two months if the respective other

partner takes the leave. Lone parents can request the two partner months for themselves. Couples can decide freely on how to make use of the leave period. For instance, both mother and father can take the leave at the same time for a total period of seven months (Ostner 2010).

The new parental benefits regulations provide stronger incentives for highly educated and high-income parents by lowering the opportunity costs of child-bearing. By contrast, unemployed parents are worse off with the new regulations. While they received 300 € for 24 months under the old regulations, they now receive the same amount for only half of the time.

5.3. Public daycare provision

In Germany childcare provision outside the family has only been on the political agenda since reunification (Evers *et al.* 2005; Fagnani 2012). In 1992 the federal government passed the Children and Youth Act which introduced a legal entitlement to public daycare for children from the age of three until they start school at the age of six. However, initially the federal government did not provide any funds for the implementation of the regulation. Consequently, municipalities experienced financial struggles and the regulation was not implemented until 1996. More severely, the government did not stipulate if the places should be offered on a full-time or a part-time basis. Due to financial constraints, the majority of places only covered half days which severely hampered the possibilities of mothers to re-enter the labour market (Morel 2007).

In 2005 the federal government recognised the need of a more comprehensive daycare provision targeted at children under the age of three and passed the Daycare Expansion Act (DEA). The DEA aims at gradually increasing daycare provision for children under three. The federal government left it to the municipalities to assess the existing need for spots and the corresponding rate of expansion. Initially the new spots were only intended for children of lone parents or children whose both parents are in paid employment. After realising that existing demands were still larger than the number of offered places, in 2010 the federal government went a step further and decided that from August 2013 on every child from the age of one receives a legal entitlement to a spot in public daycare (BMFSFJ 2004).

However, these legal entitlements do not provide the full picture for German daycare provision. Two problems exist: Firstly, whereas parental leave is the responsibility of the central government, the provision of public childcare is the responsibility of the local government. This means that the provision of public daycare varies greatly depending on the financial resources of the local administration. Also, the costs for the spot vary depending on which state the parents live in (Evers *et al.* 2005). Secondly, daycare provision still mostly refers to part-time care, which is why parents often have to make additional arrangements for the afternoons in the form of registered child minders. Another practical problem has been the acute shortage of trained kindergarten and nursery teachers. After the federal government's promise of a spot for all children aged one, many parents were disappointed to learn that their local kindergarten was not prepared to take in the extra number of children due to staff shortages or simply space restrictions. These incidents were prominently covered in the mass media and led to fears of a wave of lawsuits against the local bodies who could not keep up with the government's legal guarantee. Retrospectively, there has been no flood of lawsuits but it became clear that in some areas the demands for public childcare are much higher than the amount of spots on offer (Fagnani 2012).

Home care allowance

In 2013 the federal government introduced a cash-for-care benefit after a period of heated debate among the political parties. The benefit is paid to parents who choose to not make use of any public daycare facilities and raise their children at home instead. The benefit is intended for children between the age of 15 and 36 months. The home care allowance was introduced on the initiative of the Christian conservatives (CSU) despite widespread protest from both the opposition as well as the liberal coalition party. Various political organizations warned that the benefit is detrimental to the child's development, especially in the case of children from poor or migrant families. They also pointed out the negative effects the benefit has on the level of maternal employment and questioned the new law with regards to the efforts that have been made to increase the equality between men and women. Proponents of the home care allowance argued that the cash benefit increases the freedom of parents to choose between public and private care for children. As of May 2015 the German Federal Constitutional Court is examining the constitutionality of the new law after a complaint of the *Bundesland* Hamburg. So far around 400,000 families have requested the allowance (Caspari 14.04.2015).

5.4. Family tax benefits

There is no clear consensus in the academic debate about the impact of income tax systems on female labour market participation. According to Smith *et al.* (2003), income tax schemes have large effects on the labour supply behaviour of married women. The general argument is that if married women are to engage more in paid employment, taxation schemes must offer the right incentives. Dingeldey (2001), however, argues that tax systems alone cannot explain patterns of labour force participation. Instead it is a combination of tax incentives together with other policies that matter. Therefore, when analysing tax benefits it is important to keep the family policy context in mind.

An overview of the existing research on the topic shows that one of the reasons why the literature comes to inconclusive findings is the fact that many studies do not distinguish between female part-time and full-time employment. As mentioned earlier, in Germany the overall level of female employment has increased due to an increase in part-time work. As a result many studies refute the claim that tax systems have an impact on the labour market behaviour of women. However, in order to avoid the economic dependence of women on men or transfer payments by the state, it is important to also increase female full-time employment. Another important factor that is likely to affect the findings are differences in tax progression rates, which will be explained below.

In Germany, tax-related marriage subsidies have always been comparatively high (Dingeldey 2001). This chapter focuses on the method of income splitting as one of the most prominent features of the German tax system and shows why it is said to inhibit female employment uptake. In Germany the possibility of income splitting enables single-earner families to pay less income taxes than dual-earner families. When income splitting, the income of both spouses is added up to form the household income. The household income is then divided by two and the halved amount is taxed. In a last step the tax amount is multiplied by two again to determine the final tax amount of the household.

The reason why this system can create such large tax benefits is because Germany has a high rate of tax progression. This means that higher incomes are taxed comparatively more than lower incomes. Basically, when the household income is halved, a lower tax rate is applied and couples have to pay less taxes. This method results in significant tax savings if one spouse earns

less than the other. On the other hand, if both spouses earn roughly the same, then income splitting does not result in any financial gains. Maximal gains can be made if one spouse does not have an own income at all.

According to Steiner & Wrohlich (2004), income splitting is closely related to a comparatively low labour force participation of married women (see also Jaumotte 2003). Often, income splitting becomes a decisive factor when a mother considers to work full-time again after a baby break and possibly working part-time. Oftentimes the income gain from working full-time does not balance out the financial losses from paying more income taxes. In a report from 2014, 22% of married women working in part-time and 14% of married women not in paid employment stated that an increase in their share of paid work would be detrimental to the overall household income because of the system of income splitting (BMF & BMFSFJ 2014). This number is quite high, given that the same report shows that one third of the households that benefit from the regulation are not aware of this preferential treatment. The report concludes that income splitting does not contribute positively to the overall household income in the long term, because the tax gains are counterbalanced by the often life-long lower labour market attachment of the female spouse.

Apart from economic considerations, income splitting also re-enforces traditional gender roles and increases the dependency of married women on their spouse. This can have negative consequences in case of a divorce or when it comes to pension entitlements and the risk of old-age poverty. Since the provisions regarding income splitting have not been the subject of reform over the past years, they cannot be taken into account directly in the concluding discussion about policy change and attitudinal change. However, income splitting should be kept in mind as an important factor that is likely to influence the views and decisions of married couples about the division of paid and unpaid work.

Lastly, it should also be noted that the German system of spouse-based income splitting benefits married couples without children just as much as married couples with children. This is not the case in France, for instance, where couples need to have at least one child in order to be able to split their income. Furthermore, in France the splitting factor increases with the number of children meaning that families with more children have to pay less income taxes than families with less children (Dingeldey 2001).

The following table presents an overview of the family policy reforms made since the introduction of maternity leave in 1979. It also briefly summarizes the most important features of each reform. In the next chapter the development of gender-role attitudes will be analysed and then compared to the policy change. Since the provisions for income splitting have not changed considerably over the period in question, the family tax benefits are not part of this table. They should, however, be kept in mind when assessing the whole picture of German family policy.

Table 1. Development of German family policy (1979-2013)

Year	Leave Regulation	Benefits	Public Daycare
<i>I. Maternity Protection Act (MPA)</i>			
1979	Maternity leave	Maternity benefit	
	expanded from 2 to 6 months	375 € per month	
1984		255 € per month	
<i>II. Child-Raising Allowance Act (CRRA)</i>			
1986	Child-raising leave	Child-raising allowance	
	expanded to 10 months; possibility to work in paid employment for up to 19 hours per week	300 € per months for a period of 10 months; means-tested	
1988	12 months leave	12 months entitlement period	
1989	15 months leave	15 months entitlement period	
1990	18 months leave	18 months entitlement period	
<i>III. Children & Youth Act (CYA)</i>			
1992	36 months leave	24 months entitlement period	legal claim to public childcare for children aged 3 to 6
1998		Choice between 307 € per month for 24 months or 460 € per month for 12 months	
2001	Parental leave 36 months leave; legal claim to work part-time; expansion of part-time from 19 to 30 hours per week; both parents can take leave at the same time		
<i>IV. Daycare Expansion Act (DEA)</i>			
2005			needs-based expansion of daycare for children under 3
<i>V. Parental Benefit Act (PBA)</i>			
2007		Parental benefit 67% of previous net earnings of applicant; entitlement period: 12 months plus 2 optional ‘partner months’	
2013		Home care allowance 150 € per month for children between 15 and 36 months if raised at home	legal claim to public childcare for children from the age of 1

Source: author's own work.

6. Analysis of attitudes towards gender roles

This chapter analyses the development of public attitudes towards gender roles in Germany between 1991 and 2012 and shows what kind of changes have occurred. The guiding question is whether and how attitudinal change among different groups of individuals and across time can be related to the development of family policy. This chapter focuses on three aspects of attitudinal change. First, it analyses whether gender-role attitudes have changed during the period in question. Second, it examines whether these changes have been equally experienced by different groups of people. Third, it analyses whether group differences in attitudes towards gender roles diminish or increase over time. The first part of the chapter presents the findings on the socio-demographic differences on gender-role attitudes while the second part of the chapter discusses the relationship between family policy reform and the attitudinal changes.

6.1. The effect of socio-demographic differences on gender-role attitudes

In a first step, a gender attitudes score was computed, measuring each respondent's views towards gender roles. This was done by taking the four survey items that measure attitudes towards the role of men and women and conducting an exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring) with them. In the analysis one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (Kaiser's criterion) was retained and therefore no rotation method was used. Table 2 shows the factor loadings of each survey question on the retained factor score.

Table 2. Summary of exploratory factor analysis results for gender-attitudes questions

Item	Factor Loading
A small child is bound to suffer if his or her mother goes out to work.	.69
It is much better for everyone concerned if the man goes out to work and the woman stays at home and looks after the house and children.	.83
A child actually benefits from his or her mother having a job rather than just concentrating on the home.	.59
A married woman should not work if there are not enough jobs to go around and her husband is also in a position to support the family.	.61
Eigenvalue	2.38
% of variance	46.74
Cronbach's α	.77

Note: $N = 20046$

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, with KMO being 0.749 and all KMO values for individual items being greater than 0.7, which is above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field 2013). The percentage of residuals with values larger than 0.05 was well below the critical value of 50% (ibid.) The retained factor explains 46.7% of the variance. The scree plot was unambiguous and justifies retaining one factor. The R-matrix showed that there is no extreme multicollinearity ($r > 0.8$). The overall reliability of the scale was confirmed by a value of 0.77 for Cronbach's α .

The resulting factor attitudes score was standardized with scores ranging from -1.6 to 1.6. A score of 0 therefore means that this person's rating on the gender attitudes scale is close the average of the sample. Consequently, a negative score means that the person has more traditional gender views than the average whereas a positive score means that the person has more egalitarian views than the average.

In a second step, the retained factor score was used in multiple regression analysis to explore the effect of class affiliation, gender and place of living on gender attitudes. Since I expect the differences between the socio-demographic categories to be stable, I use the merged data for all the years in this step. All the explanatory variables were added to the analysis one by one to determine the changing effects from the bivariate regression to the other models. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Multiple regression (OLS). Effects of socio-demographic characteristics on gender attitudes

DV: Gender Attitudes Score (-1.6; 1.6)					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	.042*** (.008)	-.060*** (.011)	-.157*** (.010)	.476*** (.018)	.753*** (.021)
Class affiliation					
Lower + working class (Reference group: middle class)	-.173*** (.014)	-.159*** (.014)	-.252*** (.013)	-.237*** (.013)	-.215*** (.013)
Upper middle + upper class	.156*** (.022)	.167*** (.022)	.231*** (.021)	.235*** (.021)	.216*** (.020)
Gender: Female		.191*** (.013)	.182*** (.012)	.197*** (.012)	.213*** (.011)
Place of living: East Germany			.663*** (.016)	.677*** (.015)	.468*** (.017)
Age				-.014*** (.000)	-.014*** (.000)
Religion (Reference group: non-religious)					
Protestant					-.303*** (.016)
Catholic					-.356*** (.017)
Other ⁴					-.664*** (.030)
R ²	.013	.024	.105	.174	.200
N	20046	20046	20046	20017	20017

Notes: ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Standard errors within parentheses.

As can be seen from the table, all regression coefficients are significant at $p < .001$. Thus, social class, gender and place of living significantly affect gender-role attitudes, while controlling for age and religious denomination. In model 1, the effect size of social class on gender attitudes is $R^2 = .013$. This means that social class accounts for 1.3% of the variation in the outcome variable. While adding more variables to the model gradually improves the effect size, the largest improvement takes place in model 3, when place of living is added to the analysis.

As hypothesized model 1 shows that the lower and working class holds more gender-traditional views than the middle class, while the upper class holds more gender-egalitarian views compared to the middle class. From model 2 and 3 it can be seen that women and East Germans

⁴ This category includes all non-Christian denominations as well as Christian denominations other than Protestant and Roman Catholic.

have significantly more gender-egalitarian views than men and West Germans. In other words, lower and working class men from West Germany have the most traditional views on gender roles while upper class women from East Germany have the most egalitarian views. This is in line with the previous research and the hypotheses formulated in the theory section.

The following section presents the analysis of the relationship between the changing gender-roles attitudes and the family policy development.

6.2. The relationship between gender-role attitudes and family policy reform

To explore the linkage between attitudinal change among the different social classes and the family policy reforms, the effect of class affiliation on gender-role attitudes was tested for each of the years individually to show the step-by-step change. The results of the regression analysis are summarized in Table 4 below. Figure 1 serves for a better visualization of the attitudinal differences among the social classes.

Table 4. Regression analysis (OLS). The effect of class affiliation on gender attitudes

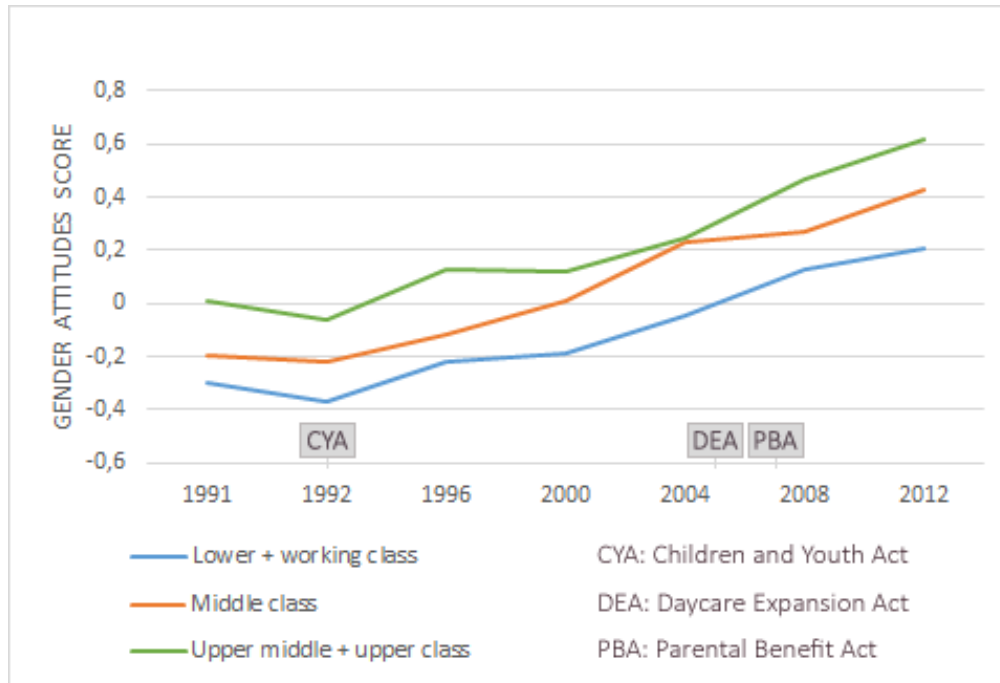
DV: Gender Attitudes Score (-1.6; 1.6)							
	1991	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012
Constant	-.153*** (.020)	-.199*** (.020)	-.110*** (.021)	.023 (.019)	.229*** (.023)	.273*** (.021)	.425*** (.026)
Class affiliation							
Lower + working class (Reference group: middle class)	-.143*** (.036)	-.170*** (.035)	-.114** (.034)	-.209*** (.032)	-.281*** (.035)	-.147*** (.035)	-.214*** (.047)
Upper middle + upper class	.166** (.054)	.138* (.054)	.239*** (.058)	.089 (.055)	.019 (.063)	.199*** (.056)	.192** (.067)
R ²	.012	.012	.012	.016	.024	.012	.021
N	2734	3132	3120	3436	2725	3231	1668

Notes: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Standard errors within parentheses.

As can be seen, the change in attitudes is almost identical for the three different classes. Over the 21 years period attitudes across all social classes have become more egalitarian. In 2012 the attitudes of the lower and working class have reached a level above the attitudes held by the upper class in the beginning of the 1990s. From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s the attitudes

of the upper class almost remained constant and approached those of the middle class in 2004. After that they became more egalitarian again compared to the attitudes of the middle class.

Figure 1. Gender attitudes of social classes (1991-2012)

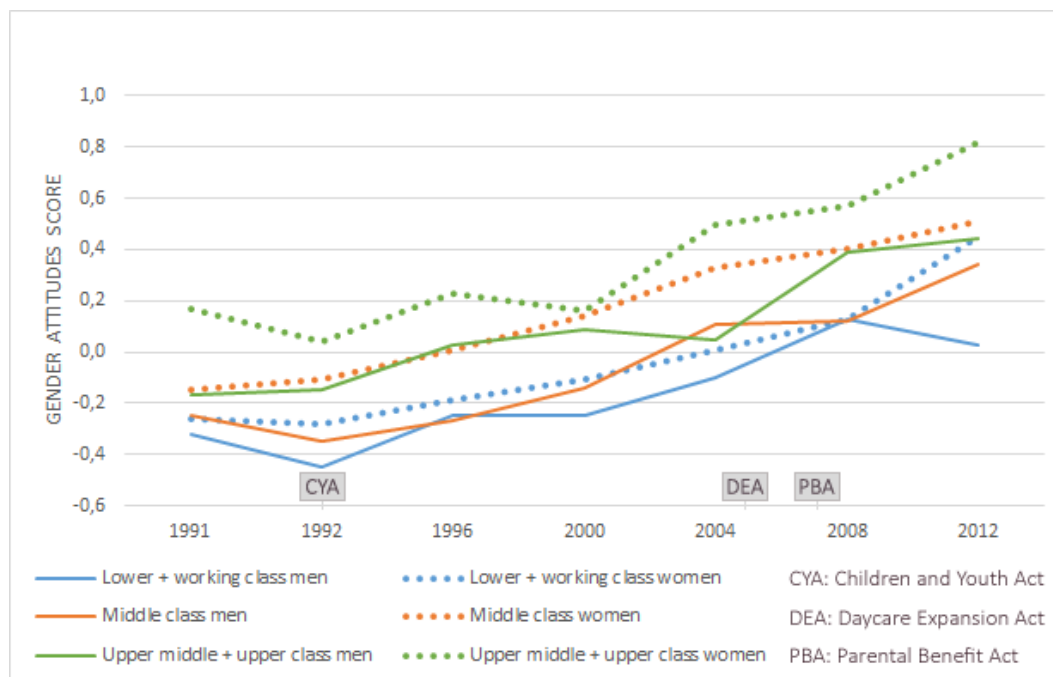


When it comes to the relationship between the policy change and the development of attitudes, hypothesis 1 cannot be confirmed. Since all three social classes have developed less traditional views, it is not possible to ascribe the policy change to only one social class. Moreover, it is difficult to make out a direct relationship between the reforms and the attitudes, since the development of attitudes is quite consistent over time. However, between 1996 and 2000 the attitudes of the upper and the lower class changed less than the attitudes of the middle class. This could be interpreted as if the attitudinal change in the middle class was important for the policy reforms in 2007 and 2013. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that all the classes have developed more gender-egalitarian views. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the policy reforms were initiated due to middle class interests.

It seems safe to conclude though that the passing of the Daycare Expansion Act rests on the interests of all classes to leave behind the traditional single-earner mentality and facilitate maternal labour market participation instead. Regarding the directionality of the relationship, no clear statement can be made since the attitudinal change is constant over the observed time period.

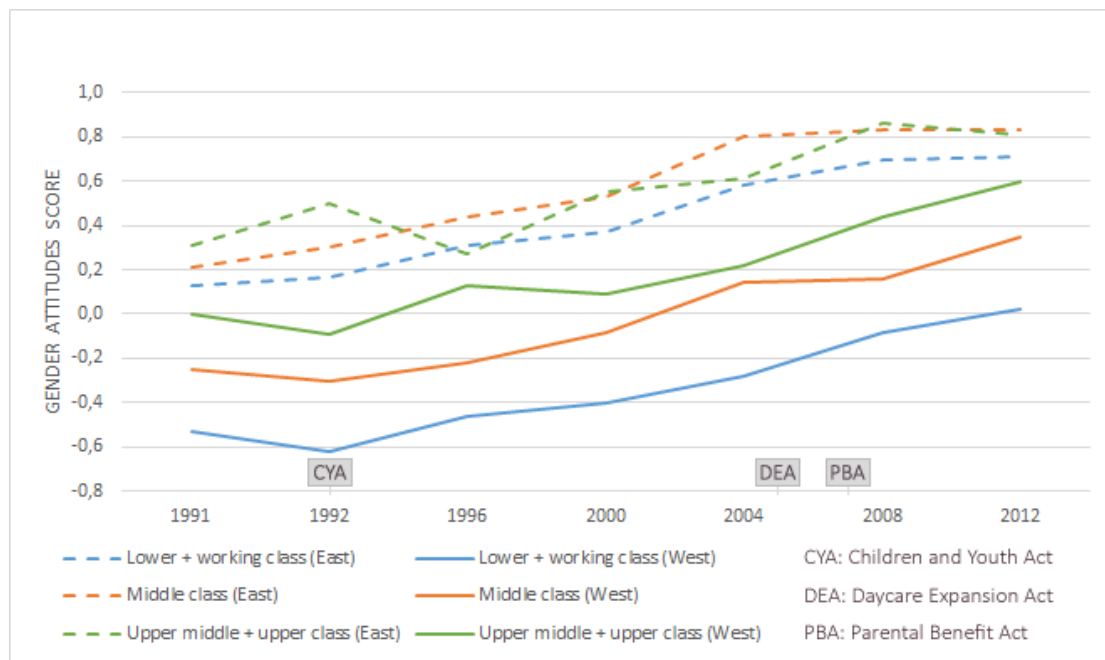
The following two figures show the same as Figure 1, but separates the attitudes of women from those of men (Figure 2) and the attitudes from East Germans from those of West Germans (Figure 3). Figure 2 shows that upper and middle class women have the most gender-egalitarian attitudes, while the attitudes of lower class women are not as egalitarian as those of upper class men but still more egalitarian than the attitudes of middle and lower class men.

Figure 2. Gender attitudes of social classes divided by men and women



What seems surprising in Figure 2 is the development of attitudes of upper class men between 2000 and 2004. After stagnating for a while they fell below the attitudes of middle class men in 2004. Even though they sharply rose again after 2004, they now start to converge again towards the attitudes of middle class men. Attitudes of lower and working class men, on the other hand, rose above the attitudes of middle class men in 1996 and 2008, but now drift apart again. This shows clearly that there are no overall trends of attitudes convergence among the different groups.

Figure 3. Gender attitudes of social classes divided by East and West



From Figure 3 it can be seen how pronounced the differences between East and West Germans are. However, unlike the differences between men and women, there seems to be a slight trend towards convergence since 2008. What is also surprising is that in East Germany the attitudes of the upper class have been less egalitarian than the attitudes of the middle class for the most part since 1994.

7. Conclusion

This final chapter provides an answer to the research question, summarizes the results of the thesis and discusses them. Subsequently, two possible directions for future research are outlined. The aim of this thesis has been to shed light onto the relationship between gender-role attitudes and the development of family policy in Germany. More precisely, the thesis asked:

What is the directionality of the interaction between policy change and mass preferences and to what extent does social class matter in this relationship?

With regards to the overall relationship between policies and attitudes, the empirical analysis has shown that both preferences and policies have developed in the same direction: Individual attitudes have become less traditional across all social groups and the majority of the policy reforms support a modern, dual-earner family model. When it comes to the directionality of the relationship between policy change and attitudes, no clear statement can be made. Since the attitudinal change has been more or less constant over the whole observed time frame, it cannot be determined whether the policy change is the cause or the consequence of the attitudes towards gender roles. Moreover, there is no clear evidence that upper class attitudes have been more important for policy-makers than the attitudes of the lower and the middle class. On the contrary, the fact that between 1996 and 2000 the attitudes of the upper and lower class changed less than the attitudes of the middle class could be interpreted as an indication that the attitudinal change in the middle class was an important precondition for the policy reforms after the turn of the millennium.

However, the finding that attitudes have become more egalitarian overall should not distract from the fact that there are considerable differences among the different social groups that were analysed. Throughout the observed time frame, the upper middle and upper class had less traditional views than the middle class and the lower and working class. Moreover, women and East Germans had more egalitarian views than men and West Germans respectively. These findings are in line with previous research showing that social class, gender and place of living are significant predictors for variations in gender-role attitudes in Germany. Overall, the empirical analysis showed that there is little sign of attitude convergence in Germany. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that, despite the overall trend towards more egalitarian views, Germans still hold relatively traditional gender-role attitudes compared to other industrialized countries. This is surprising, given that the male-breadwinner family model is not a reality anymore for many families in Germany. One plausible explanation for the continued prevalence of traditional gender-role attitudes might be that German women are far more likely than men to be engaged in providing care for dependent family members. It seems that as long as women provide the role as main carer, men will be perceived as the main breadwinner of the family– even though the reality might look differently.

When it comes to the policy reforms, the analysis has shown that the majority of new regulations support the dual-earner family model. The biggest changes in German family policy have occurred in 2005 with the Daycare Expansion Act and in 2007 with the Parental Benefit Act.

In the DEA the government recognised the pressing need for more public childcare and started to pave the way for an expansion of childcare facilities. However, there is still room for improvement concerning the amount of spots available as well as the overall quality of the facilities. The PBA can be described as a watershed moment, since it replaced the flat-rate child-raising allowance with income related parental benefits and at the same time cut the entitlement period in half. It can thus be interpreted as a strong incentive for mothers to re-enter the labour market after one year of parental leave. Low-income families, on the other hand, receive considerably less benefits under the new system.

The home care allowance of 2013 seems to represent a step back to the old single-earner family mentality, because it encourages mothers to stay at home and care for their children instead of re-joining the labour market. Especially less educated women with a weaker labour market attachment should be expected to benefit from this allowance. The question that comes to mind is: Why was this reform implemented when the shortened paternity leave as well as the expansion of daycare centres aim at supporting maternal labour market participation? As mentioned earlier, there are considerable differences between East and West Germany, with West Germans holding much more traditional views than East Germans. Since the reform was introduced by the Bavarian sister party of the ruling Christian Democratic Party (CDU), one plausible explanation would be that the party catered to the more traditional views of their voters. Therefore, the home care allowance might be considered as an indicator that policy-makers follow the public demands of their constituency, even if this means going against the tide.

All in all, taking a closer look at the family policy reforms that have been implemented since the new millennium, one gets the impression that the German government focused its efforts on creating incentives for well-educated, high-income women to have a baby rather than on creating incentives for the average mother to re-join the labour market after the paternity leave. From a perspective where the only goal is to increase the fertility rate, this approach might be reasonable. After all, it should be well-educated high-income women who are least willing to risk their career for a baby while women with a weaker labour market attachment are likely to prioritize family in the first place.

However, this thinking is flawed in a number of ways. Firstly, it indirectly assumes that women either prefer a career or children and that women will conduct their lives according to their

preferences. This view does not take into account that women might have shifting preferences and that preferences might be shaped by surrounding institutions and opportunity structures. As mentioned in the theory part of the thesis, gender-role attitudes should best be understood in terms of a combination of the calculus and the cultural approach. While the cultural perspective acknowledges that attitudes on gender roles are based on personal values and beliefs, the calculus approach points out that they are also determined by practical considerations.

Secondly, the goal should not be to only increase fertility rates but also to promote the reconciliation of work and family life and raise overall female labour market participation. As mentioned earlier, an increased female labour market participation is vital for the sustainability of the welfare state and also helps prevent old age poverty among women as well as child poverty. However, the now created incentive structure is unlikely to boost the labour force participation rates among women. Instead, it is likely to deepen the cleavage between high- and low-income mothers and to intensify differences in labour market attachment among well and less educated women. Therefore, policies like the home care allowance cannot be considered a policy instrument to mitigate poverty and boost equality. Combined with family tax benefits that financially reward single-earner families, the home care allowance can be expected to contribute to the continuing prevalence of conservative gender-role attitudes in Germany.

As far as ideas for further research are concerned two things come to mind: Firstly, since the latest policy changes are still relatively new, it might be interesting to see how gender-role attitudes continue to develop. Especially the effects of the home care allowance introduced in 2013 should be interesting to examine, since the allowance largely contradicts the efforts made in the previous reforms. Secondly and more importantly, it is suggested that this study should be repeated with panel data, i.e. attitudinal data that is based on the same set of individuals over time, in order to control for third variables that might impact on the relation of policy reform and attitudinal change. For Germany panel data exists in the German Socio-Economic Panel (G-SOEP) database. However, this database does not contain information about gender-role attitudes. Therefore, the design of the study would need to be slightly modified.

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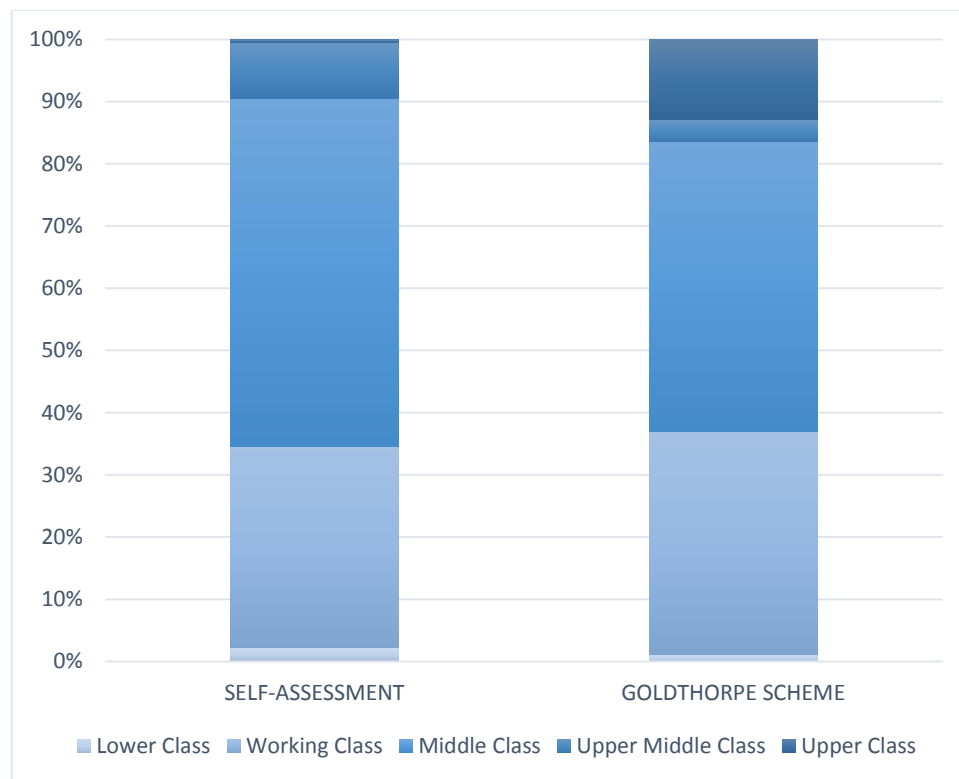
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Appendix

Figure 4. Frequency distribution of social classes according to self-assessment and Goldthorpe scheme



Source: author's own work.

As can be seen from Figure 1, when self-assessing their social class, respondents seem to be reluctant to place themselves in the upper middle or the upper class. Overall, however, the frequency distribution is quite similar, which justifies the choice of the self-assessment variable.

Table 5. Regression analysis (OLS). The effect of class affiliation according to the Goldthorpe class scheme on gender attitudes

DV: Gender Attitudes Score (-1.6; 1.6)						
	1991	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008
Constant	-.266*** (.018)	-.336*** (.018)	-.243*** (.018)	-.147*** (.017)	.004 (.019)	.129*** (.019)
Class affiliation (Reference: Skilled & unskilled workers)						
Non-manual workers	.301*** (.040)	.428*** (.042)	.490*** (.042)	.497*** (.040)	.493*** (.046)	.443*** (.043)
Self-employed	.198* (.081)	.076 (.087)	.020 (.074)	.117 (.068)	.229** (.079)	.170* (.074)
Higher service class	.416*** (.067)	.460*** (.071)	.488*** (.064)	.447*** (.040)	.497*** (.068)	.503*** (.064)
R ²	.030	.041	.053	.051	.054	.044
N	2734	3132	3120	3436	2725	3231

Notes: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Standard errors within parentheses.

In the regression analysis skilled and unskilled workers were combined and used as a reference group. Farmers were included in the group of the self-employed. The analysis was made for six years and shows similar results than the model with the self-assessment class scheme.